



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 19, 2003

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Mackinac Bridge Alternatives Being Explored

Legislators will continue to look for ways to preserve the 'Mighty Mac'

LANSING – In the wake of Governor Granholm vetoing legislation that would have provided critical funding to the Mackinac Bridge, northern Michigan legislators are now looking for other ways to help pay for the impending construction projects totaling over \$200 million.

“I was disheartened when this legislation was vetoed,” said state Sen. Jason Allen (R-Traverse City), a sponsor in the five-bill Mackinac Bridge Preservation Package. “Now we must move forward and explore what our alternatives are, whether that be a reintroduction of the legislation or finding new ways besides other than toll increases to keep the bridge safe and secure.”

The most expensive of the upcoming projects is a complete re-decking of the Mackinac Bridge, which is estimated to cost over \$183 million to complete. Even after recent toll increases, there will not be enough revenue generated to cover the costs.

“The Mackinac Bridge is our state symbol and a vital piece of economic infrastructure that deserves the support from all of Michigan,” said Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba). “To ensure a prosperous future for the Upper Peninsula and the entire state, we must make sure the bridge is properly maintained and that any tolls are kept affordable.”

The fiscal impact of additional rate increases will pose an additional burden on the economy of northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. Commuter rates are already scheduled to increase by 33 percent by 2006.

“As a state, we must recognize that we need to get involved in the future care of the bridge,” said Representative Scott Shackleton (R-Sault Ste Marie). “The days of ignoring the fact that the bridge is a state asset and of treating it as a separate corporation must come to an end.”

“These vetoes will not deter our support for the bridge as we continue to work for a solution,” said Allen.